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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002954

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TO NICOLE OTALLAH FOR AMBASSADOR HERBST

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TAGS: [IN](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRS](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)  
PTER, SOCI  
SUBJECT: GOI SEEMS OPEN TO DEVELOPING RECONSTRUCTION AND  
STABILIZATION CAPABILITIES

Classified By: Political Counselor Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization Ambassador John Herbst met MEA officials November 6 to explore potential areas of cooperation between the United States and India in civilian reconstruction and stabilization efforts. United Nations-Political Division Joint Secretary Asit Bhattacharjee recognized the importance of developing civilian capacities to meet the challenges posed by failing and failed states. Bhattacharjee promised to engage his bureaucracy, but cautioned that it would entail convincing GOI officials of the merits of developing such capacities. Americas Division Joint Secretary Gaitri Kumar also seemed favorably inclined. Joint Secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran) T.C.A. Raghavan appeared less interested in pursuing cooperation in this area. End Summary.

Ambassador Herbst Describes U.S. Goals  
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12. (SBU) Ambassador Herbst described the mission of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) as seeking to improve coordination, planning, and implementation of reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) assistance to meet the global challenges presented by failed states and ungoverned spaces. The Office has created an inter-agency mechanism to respond to political and post-stabilization crises. In conjunction with other State bureaus, S/CRS is working to foster multilateral and bilateral efforts on civilian reconstruction and stabilization. S/CRS is also establishing a Civilian Response Corps (CRC), made of civilian federal employees and eventually volunteers from the private sector and state/local governments. Members will train and equip to deploy rapidly overseas to provide R&S assistance.

13. (SBU) Herbst acknowledged the new U.S. administration would determine future funding for the program but stressed that the U.S. Congress has already appropriated \$55 million for the development of a small corps. This corps of 600 would be ready to deploy in the fall of 2009.

14. (SBU) Herbst emphasized that since the challenges presented by failing states and ungoverned spaces are global, the USG encourages other nations, especially those with exceptional capabilities, to institutionalize and develop similar civilian capacities. The British and Canadians have created such capabilities since 2004, and the UN's Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office have also developed capacity to address these challenges. Herbst said the USG wants a "peacebuilding" capacity that can

quickly deploy and potentially complement the role of the UN and other peacekeepers. The European Union has expressed interest, especially since the group is maintaining a stabilization operation in Kosovo. The USG has also explored this idea with the African Union. Herbst told Bhattacharjee he has already had useful discussions with officials in Japan, South Korea, and China.

And Bhattacharjee Has an Open Mind  
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15. (SBU) Bhattacharjee declared he is familiar with the challenges posed by failing states and ungoverned spaces, having worked exhaustively on issues relating to the work of several UN missions in Africa during the past six years. When asked about the conditions under which such a team would be deployed, Herbst replied it could be in response to an individual nation's decision, a coalition of willing nations, or a decision to intervene by the UN. He stressed his view that in almost all instances, deployment would occur only after the host government's request. Bhattacharjee agreed that post-conflict reconstruction is very important; otherwise, "war economies and structures" will remain. He then described in length weaknesses that characterized UN missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. According to Bhattacharjee, common weaknesses in UN missions remain a lack of translating concepts to the ground and the incoherent manner in which UN bureaucracy establishes missions, often resulting in the creation of "hydra-headed monsters with no legs." He stressed stabilization issues are not adequately addressed during the pre-planning stage and contended that UN

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plans, once blessed, cannot be deconstructed; they can only be added to.

16. (C) Herbst said he shared Bhattacharjee's analysis. He noted that it highlighted the need for nations to develop R&S capabilities of their own, and the USG is eager to explore to what extent the GOI is interested in developing civilian skills. Herbst stressed there may be times when the GOI finds it is in its national interest to have a capacity that it can immediately deploy either unilaterally or in concert with like-minded nations. At this point, Bhattacharjee raised the continuing relevance of the UN. Herbst responded that he could envision various permutations, including a deployment in support of a UN peacekeeping mission. He told Bhattacharjee USG officials will meet their British and Canadian counterparts in early December to discuss R&S efforts and that a larger meeting with other nations with an interest in exploring the concept further is planned to take place during the first half of 2009. Bhattacharjee advised Herbst the GOI may be interested but he would first need to sensitize his government on the concept's merits. Herbst offered his office's services if Bhattacharjee believed it would be useful in helping the Indian bureaucracy think through the concept. Bhattacharjee suggested the U.S.-India Joint Working Group on Peacekeeping as one good venue to further discuss the concept. (Note: The Joint Working Group met earlier this year and is not expected to meet again until around May/June 2009.)

While Joint Secretary Raghavan Sticks to Afghan Brief  
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17. (SBU) Raghavan said he believed human capacity building in Afghanistan is the most important aspect of assistance. He then described in detail the GOI's various efforts to help Afghanistan in that regard--i.e., the 500 Afghan students attending Indian colleges every year for the past several years. An Indian NGO is also teaching Afghan war widows how to supplement their income through stitching and making jams. However, trade barriers remain a hurdle, Raghavan declared. He stressed the key to fully unlocking southern Afghanistan's trading potential lies in efficient transportation of products such as fruit. Afghan trucks should be allowed to

travel through Pakistan to India, even if the Pakistani government does not allow Indian trucks to cross its territory to reach Afghanistan, according to Raghavan. The stability and prosperity of Afghanistan depend on the ability to connect that nation to the huge Indian market. Herbst told Raghavan he agreed on the importance of building human capacity and emphasized the Civilian Corps' focus on helping local societies develop their own skills.

But Joint Secretary Kumar Seems Interested

18. (C) Kumar promised to speak with MEA colleagues Bhattacharjee and Raghavan and solicit their views on the USG concept. She said she would ask them how the GOI can dialogue with the USG on this topic, but cautioned that her government historically only supports interventions in other nations when there is an invitation by that nation's government and the intervention occurs under the UN flag. She praised Canada's civilian assistance model in Afghanistan as excellent. When asked whether the Defense Department would lead the Civilian Corps, Herbst responded that this is a civilian corps and recent experiences have taught the USG the importance of civilian agencies leading reconstruction efforts. Upon being informed about the planned meeting between interested nations, Kumar called it an excellent idea and requested the USG to keep her office updated. Kumar informed Herbst about Secretary Rice's request to India to provide additional assistance to Afghanistan. Kumar said the GOI was committed to providing further in-kind assistance and perhaps this concept could be a possibility. Herbst maintained our two governments can easily cooperate in this area if we choose to. Kumar agreed and suggested this could potentially be folded into the Joint Working Group on Peacekeeping and/or the Global Issues Forum.

Comment

19. (C) We may have an opportunity with the GOI on

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reconstruction and stabilization efforts. Joint Secretary Bhattacharjee seemed to instantly comprehend the utility of developing such capacities and displayed expertise about on-the-ground challenges and the UN machinery's inadequate responses to meet them. He should prove to be an effective interlocutor on pressing this matter forward. Post will follow-up with MEA officials and also search for other bilateral and multilateral interactions where we can encourage India to move toward developing its own national civilian reconstruction and stabilization skills. Additionally, if senior USG officials visiting India make the case for increasing the GOI's political investment in this concept, it will help Bhattacharjee and Kumar make the case internally in the MEA.

Biographic Information for Joint Secretary Bhattacharjee

110. (U) Bhattacharjee told Ambassador Herbst his father worked closely with the U.S. military in World War II while serving as an aviator in northeast India. His father also participated in an Indian air contingent in a UN mission in Katanga. His older brother is in the Indian Army and was deployed with the Indian contingent in the UN Mission in Angola. Bhattacharjee studied at Kabul University, speaks fluent Dari, and worked in Afghanistan for his first assignment. He speaks fluent English and is likely to speak Bengali as well. He also contributed to an ECOSOC concept paper on peacebuilding.

111. (U) Ambassador Herbst has cleared this cable.

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